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Hays, H. H. & Snow L.

Addresses delivered before
the Young Men's Jefferson
Society.



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ADDRESSES

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

YOUNG MEN'S JEFFERSON SOCIETY,

ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY, YEAR OF INDEPENDENCE 56.

Henry B. May and C. S. Snow
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ADDRESSES,

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"THE following Addresses were delivered before the **YOUNG MEN'S JEFFERSON SOCIETY** of New York, by Mr. **HENRY H. HAYS**, and Mr. **T. SNOW**, members. We are right glad to see the young and ardent speaking so plainly, and wherewithal so well. It is a sign, a 'star in the West,' that will as surely guide to liberty and happiness as the fabled 'star in the East' has led to slavery and debasement. We perceive that several ladies have honored the Society with their presence, and made bold to declare their sentiments. Cicero's 'Thought unrestrained, and Speech as free as Thought' is about to be realized."—THE (*New York*) EXAMINER.

ADDRESSES

DELIVERED

BY **HENRY H. HAYS**.

HAVING left the clamorous joy, and the noisy patriotism with out, we have assembled together calmly and coolly to examine the benefits resulting to us from the Revolution of '76. But I shall not say, as is said, that all was gained in that struggle; that we may sit down and quietly enjoy the fruits of it; that all is now as it should be; that we are happy and free! No; much as was then done, more yet remains to do. Nay, upon

our unceasing watchfulness and vigilance depends the continuance of these very blessings. There are those, who, to advance their own interests, to satisfy their own inordinate ambition for power, would not scruple to barter their country's liberties. I shall show what are the benefits resulting from the American Revolution, and then state some of the objects yet to be obtained.

The state of the world, immediately prior to the American Revolution, is but a history of it for ages back. The world had, indeed, progressed in knowledge, true, men had sometimes caught a glimpse of the fair form of Liberty; sometimes taken a stand against tyranny and oppression, but such instances are rare; they were generally contented to be ridden by king or priest, and, unless the spur was thrust too hard, they held their backs quietly for both. I said the world had progressed—it had, and men began to be restless under the arbitrary sway of aristocracy. In America the galling yoke chafed the necks of the people, and they swore to be free or die in the attempt; noble was the cause, and glorious the result; hard was the struggle, but it was for that which was dearer to them than life, without which, indeed, life was but a burden. They stood, an intrepid band, undaunted and undismayed. Tyranny poured in its thousands of hireling troops to crush the noble patriots; but how vain are the efforts of tyrants, when men are determined to be free.

Look at the leaders and counsellors of the American Revolution; mark their cool, determined courage, their magnanimity, and their inflexible integrity. Look at WASHINGTON, JEFFERSON, FRANKLIN, ADAMS, ALLEN, HANCOCK, and PAINE, with others too numerous to mention. Then see their opposers; mark *their* acting, ay, and witness their imbecility, their sacrifices of honesty, of virtue, of all that is good, to aid their unholy machinations; and how do the base myrmidons shrink before the glory of the American patriots? View with your mind's eye the "Hall of Independence," where

were assembled America's wisest and best men ; imagine the Declaration of Independence read ; see the glow of patriotism on the cheeks of the venerable reformers ; witness the firmness with which they tread as they walk forward to sign the document ; see the fixed look of determination as they retire from signing, it may be, their death-warrant. Shall the events of that day be forgotten ? In vain may fanatics attempt to check the mirth and throw a gloom over its festivity ; the people will hail it with joy, and celebrate it with enthusiasm. The beneficial effects of that Revolution were not confined to us alone ; America once free, the world began to examine, to admire, and, in France, to follow ; and there liberty was at first successful, but the noble design was frustrated by tyrants, and the clergy aided in the attempt. Yes, the clergy aided in the attempt to crush the young germ of freedom which had begun to flourish in France ; and it is the duty of every person *here* to watch narrowly this foe to liberty, which can be completely successful only while the people are slaves ; they would have a union of church and state ; and, were it in their power, they would again have this country under the yoke of slavery. But again in France has the battle of freedom been fought and won ! In three days did the people obtain their rights ; in three days did they change their condition from debasing slavery to comparative freedom ; and never did the fire of liberty burn more pure—never did the people so completely triumph as in those three days ; for magnanimity, for courage, and for true virtue, they stood unsurpassed, while their tyrannical governors were sunk deep in corruption and crime ; since which revolutions have rapidly succeeded each other, and may they continue to spread until the world shall become one great republic. Having thus shown the progress of civil liberty, which had its origin in the American Revolution, I shall now state its effects upon our religious liberty.

Prior to the Revolution, persecution, for opinions' sake,

was frequent. The very founders of New England, who had fled from persecution, commenced the same work in its most horrid form. The mild and inoffensive Quakers were hung for heresy, and none were safe, unless sheltered by the wing of Orthodoxy. But the patriots of '76 knew, that to break the shackles from the body was of less moment than to free the mind; our Constitution secures, therefore, the right to every person to enjoy, unmolested, his opinions; no creed is considered so sacred as to make it a crime to question its truth, nor any so impious as to secure for its possessor imprisonment or death. Here, then, in this country is the liberty of conscience secured; here was the work of reform begun; here as it triumphed. The thick fog of ignorance and superstition are disappearing before the bright sun of truth. Men are beginning to reason and enquire, and halls of science and temples of Reason are erecting among them. Superstition is making her last struggle, her last attempt to keep the minds of men under her subjection, but it is in vain; "eyes once opened to truth, can never again be closed," and men, once thoroughly freed from superstition, will never again be polluted by her embrace. Civil and religious liberty are both flourishing, affording ample proof that the world will ere long be freed from the fetters with which she has hitherto been so unhappily bound. I have thus enumerated some of the advantages gained by our forefathers. I will now state what I conceive to be the work left for their descendants to perform: The first great object is a national system of education; by which *all* could receive a good education. Secondly, The amelioration of the condition of the working classes. Thirdly, The proper station of women in society. Fourthly, The abolition of slavery.

When we reflect upon the numbers of uneducated youth in our cities; when we reflect, that there are thousands of children about our streets without any fixed employment, entirely ignorant of their duty towards their fellow beings,

possessing none of those feelings of tenderness and love which a good education bestows, can we wonder that vice and misery exists to such an extent? It is this neglect of educating children that produces so much wickedness and inequality. Our Declaration of Independence declares, "that all men are free and equal;" is there not, then, something radically wrong in our institutions that acts thus in opposition to the Declaration? All men are born free and equal; at the moment of their birth they may be all equal—equally helpless, but from the moment they can distinguish objects the inequality begins. The one opens his little eyes on splendor and magnificence; the other on wretchedness and squalid misery; the one receives a liberal education, and is enabled to pass a life at once respectable and happy; the other is thrown upon the world without an education, and destitute of any principle to avoid the temptations by which he is surrounded, and closes a life in the most abject misery, even should he escape the prison or the gallows. I am sorry that I cannot dwell longer on this subject, for it is the most important of all I have yet mentioned; for, could universal education be once fairly established, the other grievances we complain of would be speedily redressed, and the condition of the working classes would be ameliorated; but at the present time much might be done, and they might be enabled to enjoy a reasonable quantity of the pleasure they tend to produce.

The common argument against giving females a liberal education, and an equality with men, is, that their minds are, less strong, and they are, therefore, unfit to be placed on an equal footing. I need not bring arguments to disprove this assertion. Maria Edgeworth, in her *Letters to Literary Ladies*, has fully exposed its fallacy; and she, herself, with a host of others, are a triumphant refutation of it. But why is it that men, men of science too, themselves free from prejudice, should yet allow priests to work up the feelings, and alarm

the fears of their wives, sisters, and daughters, often resulting in insanity and death? The following extract from a work recently published, entitled, "Domestic Manners of the Americans," by an English lady, is much to the point, and deserves the serious consideration of all who wish to see women advanced to their proper station in society.

"The price of entrance to this little Eden, (Hoboken,) is the six cents you pay at the ferry. We went there on a bright Sunday afternoon, expressly to see the humors of the place. Many thousand persons were scattered through the grounds; of these we ascertained, by repeatedly counting, that nineteen-twentieths were men. The ladies were at church. Often as the subject has pressed upon my mind, I think I never so strongly felt the conviction that the Sabbath day, the holy day, the day on which alone the great majority of the Christian world can spend their hours as they please, is all passed (if passed entirely) within brick walls, listening to an earth-born preacher, charms he never so wisely.

"O, how can they renounce the boundless store
Of charms which Nature to her vot'ries yields?
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields,
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes the song at even,
All that the mountain's sheltering bosom yields,
And all the dread magnificence of heaven.
O, how can they renounce and hope to be forgiven!

"How is it that men of America, who are reckoned good husbands and good fathers, while they enjoy sufficient freedom of spirit to permit their walking forth into the temple of the living God, can leave those they love best on earth, bound in the iron chains of a most tyrannical fanaticism? How can they breathe the balmy air, and not think of the tainted atmosphere so heavily weighing upon breasts still dearer than their own? How can they gaze upon the blossoms of the spring, and not remember the fairer cheeks of their young daughters,

waxing pale, as they sit for long, sultry hours, immured with hundreds of fellow-victims, listening to the roaring vanities of a preacher canonized by a college of old women? They cannot think it needful to salvation, or they would not withdraw themselves. Where is it? Do they fear these self-elected, self-ordained priests, and offer up their wives and daughters to propitiate them? Or do they deem their hebdomadal freedom more complete, because their wives and daughters are shut up four or five times in the day at church or chapel?"

"There is a people who will, one day, be very great; I mean the Americans. One stain only obscures the perfect splendor of reason which vivifies that country; slavery still subsists in the southern provinces; but when the Congress shall have found a remedy for that evil, how shall we be able to refuse the most profound respect to the institutions of the United States."

So said Madame de Stael years ago, and the evil yet exists; but the people have begun seriously to turn their attention to this subject, and see the inconsistency of declaring all men to be free and equal, yet retaining millions of their fellow-beings in slavery. An Indian chieftain, in his adventures recently published, expresses his indignation at the injustice of slavery in the following terms: "Have you, Americans, not professed to the world, that 'ALL MEN ARE BORN FREE AND EQUAL?' Is this not mockery? Are not these very letters shaded by the crimson blood of your suffering brethren? Or are not Africans men? Tyrant, does not your bleeding slave, while kneeling to you for mercy, address you in the language of human nature; and do not *you* prove yourself incapable of appreciating that language?" The prejudice against even the free blacks is very strong; and, while on this subject, I cannot forbear giving a short extract from Duncan's Travels, relative to the separation of the colors in churches; and it is, indeed, strange, that persons, who acknowledge God to be the

father of all, and to have an equal affection for all, should thus make so scrupulous a distinction.

"I had occasion to remark the jealous separation which takes place, in this country, in the churches, between the whites and the blacks. None in whom a tinge is detected of African blood are permitted to mingle with white men; they are all restricted to pews in the further end of the gallery, conspicuously apart from the rest of the congregation. How reprehensible is such a scene, in the house and presence of Him who hath said, 'Look not on his countenance; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.' But, alas,

'He finds his brother guilty of a skin
Not colored like his own.'

"And even in the worship of the most High he must manifest his horror at such an enormity." May the time soon come when the distinction shall cease, and slavery, that blot on our fair escutcheon, be no more. Thus have I examined what was gained by the Revolution, and what are the chief objects yet to be obtained. May common sense be soon triumphant throughout the world, and man rise in his majesty, throwing off the petty considerations that have so long claimed his attention; then shall the poet's musings on the future be

When man's maturer nature shall disdain
The playthings of its childhood, kingly glare
Will lose its power to dazzle--its authority
Will silently pass by--the gorgeous throne
Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,
Fast falling to decay, while Falsehood's trade
Shall be as hateful and unprofitable
As that of Truth is now."

My friends, let the noble deeds of our forefathers inspire us to patriotism. And may we exclaim with JOHN ADAMS, "It is my living sentiment, and, by the blessing of God, it shall be my dying sentiment, Independence now, and Independence for ever!"

ADDRESS

DELIVERED

BY T. SNOW.

WE now meet, for the first time, in public, as members of the **JEFFERSON SOCIETY**. May the name, whence we derive our title never be forgotten. May we ever remember to do honor to the memory of the man, by striving to imitate his example in truth and honor—in our opposition to tyranny, and love of Columbia's freedom. From this day we must consider ourselves a public body. May we continue to progress; for, proud am I to say, that our private endeavors, humble as they were, do appear to have effected some good. Ladies, you are our vouchers; you have kindly interested yourselves in our behalf, and "who, empanoplied with woman's aid, can quail or fear (in a just cause) success?" and that ours is a just cause who shall gainsay? Your presence, my fair countrywomen, will not only tend to refine our manners, but will, at the same time, excite our emulation, and the endeavor to please and to be pleased will stimulate a mutual improvement. I trust also that the time you may devote in listening to our deliberations will not be uselessly expended.

The conflicting opinions of debate, to use a homely phrase, may be compared to the flint and steel of domestic economy, from whose collision is excited the sparks of knowledge.

We are at present but as the tender sapling emitting its foliage, but I hope in time that we shall produce fruits as well as flowers.

Thanks to our patriotic fathers, among whom THOMAS JEFFERSON ranks not the least, we can dare to enter boldly into, and to expatiate freely upon, every subject, civil or religious; the sceptre of the tyrant no longer excites our apprehension, and the faggot of the bigot is extinct. Let us pause for a moment, and consider the situation in which our country stood on that eventful day, when our existence as a nation commenced. Openly attacked or secretly betrayed, she had to struggle through a painful infancy—look at her now, but yet in youth, and capable of contending “against a world in arms.”

What man is there whose heart does not glow with pride and rapture, when he views his country's greatness, or who does not almost worship the heroic patriots who struggled to obtain and perfect it. But be it remembered, that this grandeur can only be maintained by union, by an universal diffusion of the blessings of education, and by strictly enforcing our “Declaration” that “all are created *free and equal*.” Survey the records of the republics of antiquity, (for they, alas, are no more,) and learn by their fate the inevitable consequences of inequality and uneven-handed justice. Where is Athens? Where Lacedemon? Thebes or Corinth? Where Rome the mighty mistress and despoiler of a world? They have faded, and, like the “baseless fabric of a vision,” left “scarcely a rack behind.”

Do not imagine, great as are our advantages, that we have nothing further to obtain. I wish it were so, but, alas, the insidious corrupter, wealth, has already polluted the sources of our free institutions, and made one law for the rich, and another for the poor—has already inflated the pride of many to imagine, that some are born to command, and others to obey. To oppose these tyrannical usurpations of our rights is the bounden duty of us all. May we never forget to enforce them by our practice, and never abandon them through fear.

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